

Professional Development

Prepare Yourself for the Winds of Change

by Ms Debbie Eschmann

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Progressive Technology and People Turnover

How does progress affect my Air Force career? At the beginning of this century, the assembly line revolutionized the production of goods and services. Network organization is the new revolution. In a network organization, routine, repetitive tasks will be automated and assumed by sophisticated computer systems with unprecedented scope and speed of change. In our line of business, we need to understand how these systems interrelate to manage our complex financial programs and processes required to produce a well-equipped and trained war fighting force to protect our freedom.

Won't all this automation make our work force smaller, eliminating opportunities? As you are aware, we are teetering on the edge of a massive turnover of our brethren who have accumulated immense amounts of expertise. Unfortunately they have also accumulated the years required to retire and are thinking of other fun things besides work. A significant percentage of our civilian workforce will be eligible to retire in the next 3 to 5 years.

Technological and personnel changes will open up new job opportunities. We need to be prepared and ready. Our senior leadership is committed to providing training and professional development. In SAF/FMPC, we are working to maintain, update, and communicate our guidelines for professional development, clarify any confusion, and improve the tools and processes we already have to make it happen.

Improvements

First, we are working to reorganize the existing professional development web page to make it more intuitive and easier to use. There is good information out there, but we want to design it so you'll be able to get to it quickly. Look for this very soon. Second, we are working to design a web-based tool that officers and civilians can use as a guide for career planning. You will be able to input and change data to track career development progress over your entire career. In addition, it would be updated with work experience information that could be used for resumes and annual appraisals/evaluations. We will use the Enlisted Individual Development Plan (EIDP) as a guide for the tool and the Air Force Personnel Center's (AFPC) career path as a foundation for content.

Clarifications

Levels of Achievement are the measure of merit for the Air Force Financial Management Professional Development program and there are many opportunities for achieving those levels. I will discuss briefly these different programs and explain how they relate to achieving the Air Force Professional Development Levels I/II/III.

- Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC) Financial Management Career Program (FMCP). The AFPC FMCP web site: www.afpc.randolph.af.mil provides comprehensive personnel information including a broad career path for officers and civilians in the form of a pyramid and a time-line by rank as to when education, training, and specific assignments should take place. We plan to use this information to develop an on-line tool that officers and civilians can use to input data and track career progress over ones entire career. In addition, it would be updated with work experience information that could be used for resumes and annual appraisals/evaluations. We will use the EIDP as a guide. See Chief Tanner's April 99 article.

- Certified Defense Financial Manager (CDFM) Exam. To establish a standard of excellence, the American Society of Military Comptrollers (ASMC) has developed this professional test-based certification—web site www.asmconline.org. For Air Force personnel this is considered a capstone to professional development and, beginning January 2001 will contribute 3 points to civilians Total Person Score (TPS). Although excellent as a stand-alone training tool, the Enhanced Defense Financial Management course (EDFM) administrated by DFAS is excellent preparatory training for the CDFM examination. This year Air Force received 485 quotas for this training course and we have allocated the quotas to the Commands for FY01. Check with your command professional development point of contact for more information.

- Defense Leadership and Management Program (DLAMP). DLAMP is a DoD-wide program for growing future civilian leaders through "joint" civilian training, education, and development. Civilians compete to be accepted into the program with course work partially paid for by DLAMP. We view DLAMP as one of several sources to achieve the education and experience needed to achieve Professional Development Level I/II/III and also meet our continuing professional education goals (CPE). Web site is www.cpms.osd.mil/dlamp/.

- Acquisition Professional Development Program (APDP). The APDP entails a 3-level certification process for individuals working in the acquisition field. Although not to be confused with the new FM levels for professional development, meeting the financial management requirements of the APDP program also fully meets the guidelines established for the FM Professional Development program. However, we are encouraging all Air Force Financial Management personnel to broaden their financial management experience. Therefore, as you work to meet your CPE requirements, if your experience has been primarily O&M, Investment, or Cost, etc., you are encouraged to work toward the APDP Level 1 certification. Currently there is limited access to some of the needed courses but we are working to make it possible for all financial managers to become level I APDP certified. However, in the near-term, we encourage you to take the distance learning course, Fundamentals of Systems Acquisition Management (ACQ101)—web site: dau1.fedworld.gov. Conversely, if your experience has been primarily acquisition, you are encouraged to take the available O&M classes such as Fiscal Law [web site: www.saffm.hq.af.mil/fiscallaw/] and Anti-Deficiency Act training [web site: www.saffm.hq.af.mil/FMP/ada.html].

- Level Certification I/II/III. Level certification is the measure of merit for Air Force Financial Management Professional Development. Each level builds on the other until Level III is obtained. Commands have the authority to certify Level I/II. For Level III, the Command point of contact for the program must e-mail a completed Individual Development Plan (IDP) to SAF/FMPC. This form is available on-line at www.saffm.af.mil/ under Professional Development and is used as a part of a package prepared for SAF/FM review and approval. Below are the basics in equation format for all levels. In certain cases some items can be waived and there are substitutions for certain requirements. The Professional Development Guidelines were recently updated and you should have received both a hard copy and an electronic version. Additionally, the guidelines are available on the SAF/FM web page.

Equal Level I Certification

- + Bachelor Degree with at least 12 Financial Management Type credits
- + FM Staff Officers Course (FMSOC)
- + Squadron Officers School (SOS)

Equal Level II Certification

- + Level I
- + Graduate Work
- + 6 years experience (2 FM disciplines desired)
- + Professional Military Comptroller School (PMCS)
- + Air Command and Staff College (ACSC)
- + Encouraged to pass Certified Defense Financial Manager (CDFM) exam

Equal Level III Certification

- + Level II
- + Completion of Graduate Program with 6 Financial Management Type credits
- + 4 more years experience with 2 FM disciplines required
- + Air War College or equivalent
- + CDFM exam strongly encouraged

In addition, Level I/II/III encourage 80 hours of CPE every two years (at least 20 each year). This can easily be obtained by reading/writing articles, making presentations, taking on-line courses, etc. Check with your Comptroller for videotapes available from prior Professional Development Institute (PDI) briefings that can be viewed for credit. Look for even more on-line opportunities for distance learning as we redesign the professional development web page to make it easier to use.

CPE Rule of Thumb

Most on-line courses, The Air Force Comptroller magazine articles to read for credit, and professional military education courses specifically state the number of CPE hours. However, for all others:

1 CPE = 50 Min
15 CPEs = 1 Semester
10 CPEs = 1 Quarter

Remember:

Minds like bodies, will often fall into a pimpled, ill-conditioned state from mere excess of comfort.
—Charles Dickens.

Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work.
—Thomas Edison

There are two kinds of Success. One is the very rare kind that comes to the person who has the power to do what no one else has the power to do. That is genius. But the average person who wins what we call success is not a genius. He or she is merely a person who has the ordinary qualities that are shared by others but who has developed those ordinary qualities to a more ordinary degree.
—Theodore Roosevelt

About the Author

Ms Debbie Eschmann is currently serving in a career broadening position in SAF/FMPC. She holds a BS in Information Systems/Accounting, an MA in Economics, and is Level III certified. Previous assignments include Budget Officer, Appropriation Manager, and Lead Budget Analyst at Base, MAJCOM, Air Force, and SAF levels.

